

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 VIENTI 07960 221201Z

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ACTION EA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-08 ISO-00 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-04 INR-05

LAB-01 NSAE-00 RSC-01 SIL-01 DODE-00 PM-03 H-01 L-02

NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 AID-05 OMB-01

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R 221053Z OCT 74

FM AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1240

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMEMBASSY PARIS

CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L VIENTIANE 7960

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: ELAB, LA

SUBJ: CURRENT LABOR DISPUTES IN LAOS

REF: VIENTIANE 7894

BEGIN SUMMARY: AS OF OCTOBER 22 IT APPEARS LIKELY THAT THE COUNTER-STRIKE AT ELECTRICITE DU LAOS (EDL) WILL SOON END WITH A COMPLETE ROUT OF THE COUNTER-STRIKERS. AT THE SAME TIME EFFORTS BY MIDDLE-AND UPPER-LEVEL CIVIL SERVANTS TO GET THE GOVERNMENT TO DEFINE ITS LABOR POLICY AND ARE CONTINUING AND A NUMBER OF OTHER LABOR-RELATED PROTESTS HAVE TAKEN PLACE. END SUMMARY.

1. ELECTRICITE DU LAOS: THE "STRIKE" (OR WHAT IN FACT HAS BECOME A COUNTER-STRIKE) AT EDL CONTINUES BUT APPEARS LIKELY TO END SOON, PERHAPS BY OCTOBER 23. THE MINISTER OF PUBLIC WORKS (PATHET LAO), SINGKAPO CHOUNRAMANY, SENT A LETTER TO EACH OF THE STRIKING DIRECTORS AND SUPERVISORS AT EDL AT 1100 HOURS ON OCTOBER 22 OFFICIALLY ORDERING THEM TO RETURN TO WORK AND THREATENING ADMINISTRATIVE
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 VIENTI 07960 221201Z

ACTION SHOULD THEY NOT DO SO. WE EXPECT THAT THE DI-

RECTORS AND SUPERVISORS WILL GIVE UP THEIR PROTEST AND RETURN TO THEIR DUTIES, PARTICULARLY SINCE THEY LACK ANY PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR THEIR POSITION FROM MEMBERS OF THE VIENTIANE SIDE OF THE PGNU. IT APPEARS PROBABLE, THEREFORE, THAT SINGKAPO'S OCTOBER 16 SUSPENSION OF EDL DIRECTOR GENERAL KHAM SING NGONVORARAT WILL STAND.

2. KHAM SING TOLD A MISSION OFFICER THAT HE HAD SEEN DEFENSE MINISTER SISOUK NA CHAMPASSAK ON OCTOBER 18. WHEN SISOUK ASKED HIM WHY HE HAD NOT CARRIED OUT THE CABINET'S INSTRUCTION TO ORDER ASSISTANTS BACK TO WORK AND TO SUSPEND HIS OWN PARTICIPATION IN THE MANAGEMENT OF EDL, KHAM SING SAID THAT HE HAD RECEIVED NO OFFICIAL NOTICE OF THE DECISION. HE ADDED THAT HE WAS RESISTING HIS OUSTER TO PROTECT THE PRINCIPLE OF PROPER RESPONSE TO WHAT HE CONSIDERED AN ILLEGAL OCCUPATION OF EDL RATHER THAN A STRIKE. IN DOING SO HE WAS PROTECTING SISOUK, WHO WOULD BE ONE OF THE NEXT TARGETS OF WHAT KHAM SING SAID WAS A PATHET LAO CAMPAIGN. HE ASKED WHAT SISOUK WOULD DO IF HE WERE THE LAST TO BE ATTACKED AND HAD NOBODY TO SUPPORT HIM. KHAM SING CONCLUDED BY SAYING THAT IF A PROPER AND IMPARTIAL INVESTIGATION WAS MADE, AND HE WAS FOUND TO BE AT FAULT, HE WOULD STEP DOWN.

3. IN THE MEANTIME THE NUMBER OF THOSE CIVIL SERVANTS SIGNING THE OPEN LETTER TO THE GOVERNMENT (REFTEL PARA 4) IS INCREASING. ACCORDING TO THE NEWSPAPER XAT LAO OF OCTOBER 21, ISSARA K. SASORITH, DIRECTOR OF HYDRAULICS AND OF NAVIGATION AND CHAIRMAN OF THE COMMITTEE COORDINATING THE LETTER, STATED THAT BY FRIDAY, OCTOBER 18, MORE THAN 500 PEOPLE HAD SIGNED. IN THE OCTOBER 22 XAT LAO, ISSARA SAID SIGNATURES WERE NOW BEING SOUGHT IN THE PROVINCES. ISSARA ADDED THAT THE PURPOSE OF THE LETTER WAS NOT TO COMBAT WORKERS' PROTEST MOVEMENTS BUT TO GET THE GOVERNMENT, ONCE AND FOR ALL, TO ESTABLISH RULES LIMITING PROTESTS AND TO SET UP REGULATIONS OUTLINING PRECISELY THE ROLES OF GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES SO AS TO REESTABLISH DISCIPLINE IN GOVERNMENT ADMINISTRATION.

CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 03 VIENTI 07960 221201Z

4. USAID SAVANNAKHET: LOCAL EMPLOYEES OF USAID SAVANNAKHET WENT ON STRIKE ON OCTOBER 17, COMPLAINING ABOUT ONE OF THEIR AMERICAN SUPERVISORS. A REPRESENTATIVE OF USAID MANAGEMENT AND OF THE MISSION'S LAO EMPLOYEES' ASSOCIATION WENT TO SAVANNAKHET, AND THEY AND THE USAID AREA COORDINATOR WERE ABLE TO CONCLUDE AN AGREEMENT WITH THE STRIKERS ON OCTOBER 18.

5. TAXI DRIVERS: THE NEWSPAPER VIENTIANE POST OF OCTOBER 21 REPORTED THAT MORE THAN 100 VIENTIANE TAXI DRIVERS HAD SENT A LETTER TO THE MAYOR OF VIENTIANE COMPLAINING ABOUT REGULATIONS APPLIED TO TAXIS AT THE THAT LUANG FAIR. THEY PARTICULARLY DISLIKE THE PARKING AREA ASSIGNED THEM, WHICH THEY SAID WAS TOO FAR AWAY FROM THE FAIR GROUNDS.

6. OTHER STRIKES: THE NEWSPAPER SAY KANG ON OCTOBER 19 REPORTED THREE OTHER LABOR-RELATED PROTESTS THEN TAKING PLACE: THE TEACHERS AT THADEUA WERE DEMANDING THE TRANSFER OF THEIR PRINCIPAL; THE PEOPLE OF BAN NA SOME, VIENTIANE PROVINCE, WERE DEMANDING THAT A PHYSICIAN LEAVE THEIR DISTRICT; AND THE NURSES AT CHAMPASSAK HOSPITAL WERE DEMANDING THE TRANSFER OF A DOCTOR.
CHAPMAN

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